

Parent Guide: Preparing Your Child for Surgery

💡 Surgery can feel scary for kids (and parents too!). Your child looks to you for comfort and reassurance. The calmer and more prepared you are, the safer and more supported your child will feel.

✅ Before Surgery (Pre-op Prep)

🤝 Be Honest (but gentle)

- Tell your child why they need the hospital visit in **simple, truthful words**.
- Example: *"The doctor will help fix the part of your body that's not working right."*

📖 Know More Yourself

- Learn about the surgery from your child's doctor or nurse.
- Ask for a hospital tour, videos, or child-friendly booklets if available.
- When you are calm and confident, your child will feel the same.

💬 Talk & Ask Together

Encourage your child to ask questions and share feelings. Some helpful starters:

- "What do you think will happen in the hospital?"
 - "What feels the hardest for you?"
 - "What might make it easier?"
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😊 During Preparation

❤️ Reassure

- Remind your child: hospital stays are **temporary**, not a punishment.
- Let them know doctors and nurses are "helpers."

🧑 Use Child-Friendly Words

- Say "special sleep medicine" instead of "anesthesia."
- Say "small straw in your hand" instead of "IV."
- Avoid scary words like "cut" or "needle" when possible.

Affirm Feelings

- Let your child know it's normal to be scared, sad, or angry.
 - Phrases like: *"I understand you feel worried, and that's OK."*
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Helpful Activities

Storybooks

- Read children's books about hospitals or doctors (e.g., *Franklin Goes to the Hospital*, *Curious George Goes to the Hospital*).

Play Pretend

- Use a toy doctor's kit to let your child "operate" on a stuffed animal.
- Role-play: your child can be the doctor, you can be the patient.

Comfort Items

- Pack a favorite toy, blanket, or family photo.
- Having something familiar reduces stress.

Distraction Tools

- Bring music, audiobooks, coloring books, or a tablet with cartoons/games.
 - These help during waiting times.
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Your Role at the Hospital

Provide Presence

- Hold hands, cuddle, and stay as much as possible.
- Familiar faces reduce fear.

Prepare Siblings Too

- Involve siblings in simple conversations.
- Example: *"Your brother will stay in the hospital for a few days, but then he'll come home."*

Expect Regressions

- Children may cling more, have tantrums, or go back to thumb-sucking/bedwetting.
 - This is **normal and temporary**.
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Don't Forget Yourself

Care for Yourself

- Try to rest, eat well, and maintain simple routines.
- A calm parent = a calmer child.

Lean on Support

- Ask family/friends for meals, school pickups, or errands.
 - Don't try to do everything alone.
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Final Reminder

Your **presence, honesty, and love** are the strongest medicines. When children feel safe and understood, they cope with surgery far better.